

# House Armed Services Committee

## DEMOCRATS

For immediate release: May 18, 2005

Ike Skelton, Ranking Member

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## Committee Dems Focus Efforts on Accountability and Oversight

*Washington D.C.—Today the House Armed Services Committee considered the portion of H.R.1815, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006, that falls under jurisdiction of the committee as a whole.*

### Non-Proliferation

“In the area of non-proliferation programs, we must continue to increase the resources being spent, as well as the level of coordination between agencies, in order to maximize the effectiveness of our programs,” remarked **Rep. Ellen Tauscher (CA)**.

*Rep. John Spratt (SC) offered an amendment to move \$80 billion from the missile defense agency into non-proliferation accounts.*

**Rep. Spratt** noted, “Nonproliferation programs are our front line against the threat of nuclear weapons in the hands of terrorists. We are currently spending less on the cooperative threat reduction program than we did before September 11<sup>th</sup>. The terrorist threat hasn’t diminished, so it seems unthinkable that our funding would have.”

### Death Gratuity

Rep. Robert Andrews (NJ) offered an amendment to make the recently increased death benefit for our troops applicable to everyone, regardless of combat status.

“If a Member of Congress were to die, our dependents would receive an entire year of our salary. If a servicemember dies in combat operations in Iraq, his or her dependents will receive a one-time payment of \$100,000,” explained **Rep. Andrews**. “However, for someone who dies in an accident while training to deploy to Iraq, there is a one-time payment of \$12,000.

“This is an unacceptable injustice. My amendment would bring equality to the system by eliminating the distinction between combat and non-combat related deaths. Our men and women training to deploy overseas are just as dedicated to protecting our nation as those who happen to already be in theater. We should not distinguish between the two,” concluded **Rep. Andrews**.

#### **National Defense Panel**

Ranking Member Ike Skelton (MO) offered a bipartisan amendment that would have created a panel to review the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) and provide an independent assessment to Congress.

“The upcoming QDR will guide critical decisions about weapons systems, force structure and future defense policy,” said **Rep. Skelton**. “Congress would benefit greatly from a bipartisan, independent analysis conducted by a panel working apart from the Department of Defense. Oversight of the Department of Defense is the Constitutional responsibility of this committee, and this panel would complement our efforts to fulfill that responsibility.”

*Information is not considered final until committee passage of H.R. 1815.*

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